Historical in perspective and interdisciplinary in scope, this course will examine the religious, judicial, and medical debates that were implicated in the the European witchcraze. We will venture into the darker side of the Renaissance to investigate the conditions that made possible two closely related phenomena: the subjugation of women within inquisitorial and secular regimes of punishment and control, and the establishment and regulation of modern medical practice and anatomical science.

In the wake of the invention of the movable type printing press, debates about the existence of witches, and the nature, status, and “worth” of women engaged the Latin readership of popular pamphlets, judicial manuals and medical treatises. Some of these treatises were evaluated by various feminists in the 1970’s and 80’s for their roles in exacerbating what is now called “women’s genocide”, they have been used to exemplify one of the tragedies of patriarchal history, the dynamics of institutionalized violence, and the sexual politics of religion, law and psychiatry.

More recently, feminist historians and philosophers have attended to the “other voice” of these 16th century debates - the once censored arguments of the “defenders” of witches and advocates of women’s equality or superiority. Investigating these perspectives, we will look at differing notions of “woman” and “witch” in historical knowledge, and we will examine the varying inscriptions of her figure and her language in contemporary feminist theory and feminist critiques of medico-scientific knowledge and power. We will treat the “witchcraft debates” as an archive through which we can evaluate contemporary strategies for re-reading and re-writing woman’s history and the history of feminist thought. Our aim will be to understand and to conduct feminist genealogies - historical methodologies for elucidating the “woman question” and the multiple relations of power, knowledge, and sex in the discourses of law, religion, and medical science.

**Required Texts:**


**Custom Courseware Package:** consisting of a compilation of contemporary articles, and some selections from historical treatises, on the witchcraft debates and early medico-scientific inquiry will be available in the bookstore.

**Grading Profile:**
- Brief Assignment on Readings (5 pages) 15%
- Short Analytic Essay (5-7 pages) 25%
- Research Essay (10-12 pages) 35%
- Class Presentation on a Reading 15%
- Participation 10%